



CABINET FOR HEALTH SERVICES

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
275 EAST MAIN STREET
CHR BUILDING, 5C- A
FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY 40621-0001



OFFICE OF
COMMUNICATIONS

PHONE: (502) 564-6786
FAX: (502) 564-0274

HOME PAGE: [HTTP://CHS.STATE.KY.US](http://CHS.STATE.KY.US)

STATEWIDE NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Barbara Kaminer, 502-564-7610
Jason Padgett, 502-564-4448

(Editors: This is the first in a series of releases about mental health, specifically depression and suicide that will be sent during May. Today's features Mental Health Month and Suicide Awareness Week.)

Depression and Suicide Linked; Suicides on the Rise

FRANKFORT, Ky. (May 6, 2003) -The importance of good mental health is drawing more attention throughout Kentucky and the rest of the world as depression and suicides continue to increase.

According to the Global Burden of Disease study commissioned by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, four of the 10 leading causes of disability for persons over the age of five are mental disorders. The study also reveals that mental illness, including suicide, ranks second in the burden of disease in established market economies like the United States. Major depression is the leading cause of disability within the United States.

During calendar year 2000, at least one diagnosis of some type of depressive disorder was present in more than 37,400 Kentucky hospitalizations, according to hospital discharge data collected by Kentucky's Department for Public Health.

"Neglecting an illness is almost unthinkable if the condition is a physical one, such as a broken bone or an infection. But it is all too common for people to ignore symptoms or warning signs of a mental illness," said Margaret Pennington, Kentucky's commissioner of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services.

According to the Surgeon General's Report issued in 1999, nearly half of all Americans with serious mental disorders never seek treatment. The report goes on to point out that "promoting mental health for all Americans will require scientific know-how but, even more importantly, a societal resolve that we will make the needed investment. The investment does not call for massive budgets; rather, it calls for the willingness of each of us to educate ourselves and others about mental health and mental illness, and thus to confront the attitudes, fear, and misunderstanding that remain as barriers before us."

"We have only begun to come to terms with the reality and impact of mental illnesses on society," said Pennington. "One impact we're experiencing both nationally and in our state is an increase in the rate of completed suicides and suicide attempts."

May is recognized nationally as Mental Health Month. More specifically, May 4-10 is Suicide Prevention Week as publicized by The American Association of Suicidology (AAS). This organization promotes research, public awareness programs, education, and training for professionals, survivors, and all interested persons about suicide.

According to AAS there are specific links between depression and suicide. For example,

-more-

major depression is the psychiatric diagnosis most commonly associated with suicide and about two-thirds of people who complete suicide are depressed at the time of their deaths. The risk of suicide in people with major depression is about 20 times that of the general population.

People who have had multiple episodes of depression are at greater risk for suicide than those who have had one episode. Individuals with a dependence on alcohol or drugs in addition to being depressed are at greater risk for suicide.

Those who are depressed and exhibit the following symptoms are at particular risk for suicide: extreme hopelessness, a lack of interest in activities that were previously pleasurable, heightened anxiety and/or panic attacks, global insomnia, talk about suicide or a prior history of attempts, irritability and agitation.

Over the past 20 years, an average of 500 Kentuckians complete a suicide each year, according to statistics gathered by the Kentucky Department for Public Health. Based on 2000 data, Kentucky's suicide death rate of 13.07 per 100,000 is higher than the national rate of 10.66 per 100,000.

In 2000, suicide was the second leading cause of death for Kentuckians between the ages of 15 and 34. In the same year, it was the fourth leading cause of death for Kentuckians between ages 35 and 54. Overall suicide was the 11th leading cause of death for Kentuckians in 2000 as it claimed 521 lives.

Suicide attempts are also on the rise in Kentucky, increasing by 27 percent since 2000. There were 2,274 documented suicide attempt hospitalizations in 2000, 2,681 in 2001, and 2,896 in 2002.

AAS reports that suicide is the ninth leading cause of death in the U.S., claiming 29,350 lives per year with suicide rates among youth (ages 15-24) increasing more than 200 percent in the last 50 years. The suicide rate for the elderly (ages 85+) is higher than for any other age group with a suicide death rate of 19.39 per 100,000 nationally and a suicide death rate of 25.6 per 100,000 in Kentucky.

Suicide cuts across ethnic, economic, social and age boundaries. Surviving family members not only suffer the loss of a loved one to suicide, but are also themselves at higher risk of suicide and emotional problems.

Suicide is preventable. Most suicidal people desperately want to live; they are just unable to see alternatives to their problems. More often than not, suicidal people give definite warning signals of their suicidal intentions; but others are often unaware of the significance of these warnings or unsure what to do about them.

"In order to better address the increasing problem of suicide, we've formed the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Planning Group because we believe that even one death by suicide is one too many," said Pennington.

Kentucky's efforts toward the problem of suicide, suicide attempts and the impact of each is being addressed by the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Planning Group. The purpose of this group, consisting of over 50 diverse members from across the state is to increase public awareness, identify and coordinate resources, provide training, and evaluate the impact of the group's efforts.

For more information about the Kentucky Suicide Prevention Planning Group please contact Barbara Kaminer at 502-564-7610 or email at barbara.kaminer@mail.state.ky.us.

For more information about suicide and its warning signs, visit www.suicidology.org or <http://dmhmrs.chr.state.ky.us/mh/suicideprevention/>. If you or someone you know needs immediate help in Kentucky, call your local community mental health center or dial 911.

Comprehensive Care Crisis Lines

ADANTA -- Adair, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Green, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, Taylor, Wayne. 800-633-5599.

BLUEGRASS REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION BOARD INC. -- Anderson, Bourbon, Boyle, Clark, Estill, Fayette, Franklin, Garrard, Harrison, Jessamine, Lincoln, Madison, Mercer, Nicholas, Powell, Scott, Woodford. 859-253-2737 (8 a.m.-5 p.m., M-F) or 800-928-8000 (after 5 p.m.).

COMMUNICARE INC. -- Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, LaRue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, Washington. 270-769-1304 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. M-F, 800-641-4673 after hours, TTY 888-782-8266.

COMPREHEND INC. REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION BOARD -- Bracken, Fleming, Lewis, Mason, Robertson. 877-852-1523.

CUMBERLAND RIVER REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION BOARD, INC. -- Bell, Clay, Harlan, Jackson, Knox, Laurel, Rockcastle, Whitley. *Call collect* 606-526-9598, TTY 606-528-7010.

FOUR RIVERS BEHAVIORAL HEALTH -- Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Livingston, McCracken, Marshall, Hickman. 800-592-3980.

KENTUCKY RIVER COMMUNITY CARE INC. -- Breathitt, Knott, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, Perry, Wolfe. 606-666-8712 or 800-262-7491, TTY 800-375-7273.

LIFESKILLS INC. -- Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson, Warren. 270-843-4357 from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. M-F. 800-223-8913 (24 hours), TTY 270-783-9167 or 888-537-9202.

MOUNTAIN COMPREHENSIVE CARE CENTER -- Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin, Pike. 800-422-1060.

NORTHKEY COMMUNITY CARE -- Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Owen, Pendleton. 859-331-3292 or 877-331-3292, TTY 859-331-1792 or 877-889-1792.

PATHWAYS INC. -- Boyd, Carter, Elliott, Greenup, Lawrence, Bath, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, Rowan. 606-324-1141 or 800-562-8909.

PENNYROYAL REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH/MENTAL RETARDATION BOARD INC. -- Caldwell, Christian, Crittenden, Hopkins, Lyon, Muhlenburg, Todd, Trigg. 270-881-9551 or 877-473-7766.

RIVER VALLEY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH -- Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, Webster. 270-684-9466 or 800-433-7291.

SEVEN COUNTIES SERVICES INC.-- Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, Trimble. 502-589-4259 or 800-221-0446, TTY 877-589-4259.

###